



South Central Idaho News

BLAINE, CAMAS, CASSIA, GOODING, JEROME, LINCOLN, MINIDOKA & TWIN FALLS COUNTIES

ECONOMIC TRENDS

The Twin Falls-Jerome Micropolitan Statistical Area continues to experience strong economic growth. Although the national economy has improved considerably since March 2005, the kind of growth experienced in the Twin Falls-Jerome area would be the envy of most communities. Non-farm payroll jobs across the United States grew 1.6 percent between March 2005 and this March, but the area's nonfarm payroll jobs grew 7.1 percent. While the U.S. lost manufacturing jobs, southern Idaho's manufacturing jobs grew 4.2 percent. The area's new manufacturing jobs also further diversified its economy and made it less vulnerable to the ups and downs of individual industries. While the U.S. was happy with a 0.9 percent increase in retail jobs, the Twin Falls-Jerome area enjoyed an 8.6 percent increase. The area's rapid retail growth is a result of the strong population and income growth it has experienced.

Construction is growing at an especially breath-taking pace. Work recently began on a new temple for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the widening of the Pole Line Road commercial corridor. There is also a high level of new housing starts. Employment with construction firms this March was 30.2 percent ahead of the same month last year. The much-bannered growth in U.S. construction jobs at 4.5 percent pales in comparison. In addition, many construction laborers are employed through temporary agencies, and their employment shows up in professional and business services in Table 1. The increased employment of construction laborers through temporary agencies

South Central Idaho Table 1: Twin Falls-Jerome MicSA Labor Force & Employment—Twin Falls and Jerome counties

	Mar 2006*	Feb 2006	Mar 2005	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	54,240	55,420	47,010	-2.1	15.4
Unemployment	1,580	1,590	1,880	-0.6	-16.0
% of Labor Force Unemployed	2.9	2.9	4.0		
Total Employment	52,660	53,830	45,130	-2.2	16.7
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	53,560	54,570	46,460	-1.9	15.3
Unemployment	1,810	1,970	2,140	-8.1	-15.4
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.4	3.6	4.6		
Total Employment	51,752	52,600	44,320	-1.6	16.8
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**	39,600	39,130	36,990	1.2	7.1
Goods-Providing Industries	6,880	6,890	6,160	-0.1	11.7
Natural Resources & Mining	30	30	40	0.0	-25.0
Construction	2,370	2,370	1,820	0.0	30.2
Manufacturing	4,480	4,490	4,300	-0.2	4.2
Food Manufacturing	2,520	2,540	2,540	-0.8	-0.8
Other Manufacturing	1,960	1,950	1,760	0.5	11.4
Service-Providing Industries	32,720	32,240	30,830	1.5	6.1
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	10,080	9,890	9,140	1.9	10.3
Wholesale Trade	1,860	1,850	1,740	0.5	6.9
Retail Trade	5,810	5,670	5,350	2.5	8.6
Utilities	160	150	150	6.7	6.7
Transportation & Warehousing	2,250	2,220	1,900	1.4	18.4
Information	610	600	580	1.7	5.2
Financial Activities	1,830	1,800	1,710	1.7	7.0
Professional & Business Services	5,110	4,990	4,840	2.4	5.6
Educational & Health Services	3,450	3,380	3,190	2.1	8.2
Leisure & Hospitality	3,000	3,000	2,890	0.0	3.8
Other Services	1,370	1,340	1,360	2.2	0.7
Government Education	3,410	3,390	3,350	0.6	1.8
Government Administration	3,860	3,850	3,770	0.3	2.4

*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

South Central Idaho Table 2: Employed Residents (*Seasonally Adjusted*)

County/Area	March 2006	March 2005	% Change
Blaine County	14,115	13,737	2.7
Camas County	600	585	2.7
Cassia County	10,122	9,319	8.6
Gooding County	8,585	8,008	7.2
Lincoln Count	2,524	2,436	3.6
Minidoka County	9,498	8,746	8.6
State of Idaho	733,683	703,451	4.3
United States (millions)	143	141	1.9

South Central Idaho Table 3: Changes in Personal and Per Capita Income, 2002 to 2003 Compared to 2003 to 2004						
Geographic Area	Population % Change		Personal Income % Change		Per Capita Income % Change	
	2003-2004	2002-2003	2003-2004	2002-2003	2003-2004	2002-2003
Idaho	2.0	1.8	8.2	2.4	6.1	0.6
Urban Counties	2.7	2.4	8.0	2.9	5.2	0.7
Rural Counties	0.8	0.9	8.6	1.2	7.7	0.2
Blaine County	1.6	2.0	7.0	3.3	5.4	1.3
Camas County	-2.0	-0.3	4.2	-4.0	9.9	-3.9
Cassia County	-0.7	-0.1	6.4	0.0	7.2	0.0
Gooding County	0.5	0.7	19.2	1.4	18.9	0.5
Jerome County	2.0	1.3	16.2	2.5	13.9	1.2
Lincoln County	0.4	1.6	12.8	-1.1	12.6	-2.2
Minidoka County	-0.7	-0.5	8.1	-7.8	8.8	-7.1
Twin Falls County	1.5	2.4	7.1	1.2	5.5	-1.2
Region	0.9	1.4	9.2	0.8	9.9	-1.0
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis						

South Central Idaho Table 4: South Central Idaho Population, Income Figures, 2004				
Area	Population	Personal Income (in millions)	Per Capita Income	Per Capita Rank Statewide
Idaho	1,395,140	37,497	26,877	-
Urban Counties	848,632	25,386	28,417	-
Rural Counties	546,508	12,111	24,135	-
Blaine	21,024	959	45,635	1
Camas	1,014	25	25,090	12
Cassia	21,381	529	24,733	13
Gooding	14,398	447	31,070	3
Jerome	19,304	532	27,538	6
Lincoln	4,318	97	22,550	25
Minidoka	19,189	373	19,441	41
Twin Falls	68,083	1,717	25,217	11
Region	168,711	4,679	27,659	-
Source: U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis				

is one reason for the 270 jobs added in the professional and business services industry.

South Central Idaho Table 2 on page 17 demonstrates that the other counties in the region also have experienced strong employment growth.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Regional Income

South central Idaho rebounded strongly from the effects of the national recession in 2002 and 2003, posting dramatic gains in income during 2004 that indicated a real increase in buying power.

While population growth in all but Jerome County fell well below the statewide growth rate of 2 percent

between 2003 and 2004, gains in both personal and per capital income in the eight-county region were markedly above income growth rates statewide, as shown in the South Central Idaho Table 3.

The region's population grew by less than half the 2 percent statewide rate and even more slowly than it did from 2002 to 2003 as the state was trying to free itself from the slowdown. But personal income — the total of all individual wages, business profits, investment earnings and transfer payments such as Social Security — jumped by more than 9 percent. That was more than 10 times the personal income growth of the year before.

As for per capita income — personal income equally spread among every man, woman and child in the region — the growth rate was nearly 10 percent. In 2003, per capita income actually fell by a percentage point. Five of the seven rural counties in the region all improved their ranking statewide from 2003. Blaine County with the highest per capita income and Gooding County with the third highest held their own from 2003. Only the largest of the counties, Twin Falls, slipped from 2003 but fell only one place to 11th overall. South Central Idaho Table 4 on page 18 provides specific figures.

The region's income rose 10 times faster than its population in 2004, meaning more money went into the pockets of the workers in those counties. The growth was more than three times higher than the inflation rate that year, increasing paychecks faster than basic living expenses.

And the outlook for further improvements appears good since the region's unemployment rate has plunged nearly a full percentage point in the last year to 3.1 percent in March, below the state's record low rate of 3.2 percent.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS

Cassia County

- Burley has gotten a huge boost in its recovery from the 2002 closure of the Simplot processing plant with the decision by Dutchmen Manufacturing Inc. of Indiana to open a recreational vehicle manufacturing plant. The 80,000 square-foot plant should be operating by year's end, initially employing 80 people with plans to expand to 200 within two years. The initial payroll is estimated at nearly \$1.5 million a year.

Jerome County

- Hundreds of people turned out in April for the Grower Appreciation Day at Standlee Hay in Eden, one of the area's largest employers. The company has been campaigning for improvements in rail service and has been a major supporter of efforts to improve intermodal transportation facilities to better accommodate its shipping needs to the coast and its export markets.

Blaine County

- Ski equipment maker Scott USA, which is building a new 85,000-square-foot plant in Ketchum, made quite a showing during the Winter Olympics in Italy. Alpine skiers wearing Scott goggles took two gold medals, three silvers and a bronze while snowboard cross competitors claimed a gold and a silver.

- Progressive Farmer magazine has cited Blaine County as one of the 10 best places to live in rural America. In ranking the county ninth on its list, the magazine called it "a place where wealth meets wilderness, resort living meets ranching and French restaurants meet feed stores."

Twin Falls

- The city of Castleford has finally put together a financing plan for improvements to its water system to meet federal arsenic removal standards. The city has qualified for a \$500,000 hardship loan from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality to complete the \$1.6 million financing package for the system upgrade. After obtaining a \$1 million federal grant and approving a \$106,000 bond issue, the water system users — only 120 — still needed the additional loan to get the project going. Half the loan will be forgiven and the other half repaid over 30 years at no interest. The project will more than double city water bills to \$57.54 a month.
- The Southern Idaho Potato Cooperative has negotiated a 2006 contract with ConAgra and Heinz. Details of the agreement were not disclosed, but cooperative director Dan Hargraves called it a bare-bones deal that will still leave growers struggling to break even this year.
- Glanbia Foods claimed five medals for its cheeses at this year's Wisconsin World Cheese Championships. The Twin Falls company won gold for its mild cheddar, Monterey Jack and pepper-flavored cheeses and a silver and a bronze for its marbled curd cheeses.

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